



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

LIGHT ON THE HISTORY OF THE HEBREW VERB

(נפעל or intensive נפעל)

BY ISRAEL EITAN, Jerusalem.

IT is well known that the Niph'al was used primarily in a reflexive sense, on a par with the Hithpa'el. Only in the course of time, when the Pu'al of the *Ḳal* (= فَعَّلَ) fell into desuetude, apparently because of its striking resemblance to the intensive Pu'al in the perfect and to the Hoph'al in the imperfect (נִפְעַל, עָבַד, יָצַח, יָצַח), the Niph'al began to take its place and received a passive signification. During the dawn of the Hebrew language, however, there were two reflexive conjugations in use: Hithpa'el or reflexive with Tāw and Niph'al or reflexive with Nūn. It is interesting to note that just as in Hebrew the Niph'al was transformed to a passive conjugation, so in Aramaic the Hithpa'al likewise assumed a passive meaning.

The great difference in the morphological fate of these two conjugations is indeed surprising. The reflexive with Tāw, if we take into consideration the various Semitic languages, occurs in all the four main conjugations of the verb: *Ḳal*, Pi'el, Pō'el, and Hiph'il. The ordinary Hithpa'el in Hebrew is derived from the Pi'el, as may be seen from the dagesh forte in the second radical, hithkaṭṭel from kaṭṭel, &c. But in Arabic this reflexive is found very frequently derived from the *Ḳal*, as, for instance, the eighth

conjugation *أَفْتَعَلَ*,¹ and also from the Pō'ēl, namely, the sixth conjugation *تَفَاعَلَ*. In Aramaic it is derived from the *Ḳal*, *hithk'ēl* = *ithk'ēl*, and in Syriac also from the *Hiph'il*, *ettak'al*. And even in Hebrew we find a few remnants of *Tāw* reflexive coming from the *Ḳal*, comp. *וַיִּתְפַּקְרוּ* Judges 20. 15, 17, and *וַיִּתְפַּקְרוּ* *ibid.*, verse 15; or even earlier forms, as *חִתְּנָה* Hos. 11. 3, *חִתְּנָה* Jer. 12. 5, *ibid.*, 22, 15, from *רָגַל* and *חָרָה* with reflexive *Tāw*. Moreover, even the tenth conjugation in Arabic, *اسْتَفْعَلَ*, is nothing but a reflexive of a primitive *Hiph'il* still extant in some Semitic dialects, appearing with *Sin* in Minaeic and with *Šin* in Assyrian and having penetrated at a later period, under the influence of Aramaic idioms, also into the Hebrew language, in the form of *Šaph'el*, as e.g. *שָׁפַל*, *שָׁפַל*, &c.

' Not so with the *Nūn* reflexive, whose morphological field is very limited. True, it is not unknown in other Semitic languages such as Arabic and Assyrian²; however, all the authorities in comparative Semitic grammar agree that this second reflexive form is derived from no other source but the elementary *Ḳal*,³ though its fundamental meaning may be taken from the *Pi'el* or *Hiph'il*: *נָכַר* is derived from *כָּבַד*, though its original meaning comes from *כָּבַד*; *נָשַׁם* is derived from *שָׁם*, though its meaning is taken from *הִשְׁמִיר*.⁴

This phenomenon is perplexing and requires explanation.

¹ Also in Assyrian this conjugation received such a distorted form, the *Tāw* being shifted to a place after the first radical. As may be seen from the *Mesha* inscription, this form was current also in Moabite: *הלחחם* was surely derived from the *Ḳal*, like *נלחם*. Not so in Ethiopic, where we find the form *ተከፈሉ*, under the influence of the reflexive of the *Pi'el* *ተከፈሉ*.

² In Ethiopic this form was preserved only in quadrilaterals.

³ Brockelmann, *Semitische Sprachwissenschaft*, pp. 121 f.

⁴ Brockelmann, *Vergleichende Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen*, p. 253.

Why is it that the Nūn reflexive was derived solely from the Ḳal, while the Tāw reflexive could be derived from all the principal conjugations? And even if we know that already at an early period it had lost its reflexive meaning and became a passive, still we are puzzled why it was confined to the Ḳal alone. It is the aim of the present writer to demonstrate that the Nūn reflexive, at an earlier stage, covered a larger morphological field than we used to think, that it was derived not alone from the Ḳal but also from the Pi'el and Pō'el. This I shall prove from some isolated passages in the Scriptures.

Indeed, let us observe the following list of quotations :

- I. 1. אָרוּמָם Isa. 33. 10.
2. תְּשׁוּמָם Eccles. 7. 16.
3. תְּבוֹנָנִי Isa. 54. 14.
4. תְּבוֹנִן Num. 21. 27.
5. יְבוֹנָנִי Ps. 59. 5.
- II. 1. תִּנְשָׂא Num. 24. 7.
2. וַיִּנְשָׂא⁵ 2 Chron. 32. 23.
3. וַיִּנְשְׂאוּ Dan. 11. 14.
4. תִּכְבֶּסָּה⁶ Prov. 26. 26.
5. נִכְבֶּר Deut. 21. 8.
6. נִסְרִי Ezek. 23. 48.
7. תִּכְבֶּם Lev. 13. 55-56.

The two forms נִכְבֶּר and נִסְרִי had long since attracted the attention of our grammarians,⁷ who decided to ascribe them to a composite conjugation Nithpa'el, a conglomerate of Nipha'al and Hithpa'el, with the exception that here the

⁵ Variant וַיִּנְשָׂא.

⁶ Some emend מְכַבֶּסָּה.

⁷ Compare, for instance, Profiat Duran, *מעשה אפר*, Vienna, 1865, pp. 122 f.

Tāw was assimilated to the first radical: $\text{נִתְּפַר} = \text{נִפְּר}$, $\text{נִתְּפַר} = \text{נִפְּר}$. In this manner they proceeded to explain also other irregular formations in the above-mentioned list as an Hithpa'el with assimilated Tāw: $\text{תִּתְּבֹנָה} = \text{תִּבְּנָה}$, $\text{תִּתְּנֶשֶׂא} = \text{תִּנְּשֶׂא}$, &c. This erroneous explanation was perpetuated until it came to be considered a fixed rule that the Tāw of the Hithpa'el may be assimilated⁸ to the first radical in verbs פ"ב and פ"נ (judging from נִפְּר also in פ"ו), and this circumstance is probably responsible for the fact that so far grammarians have failed to arrive at an understanding of the true nature of these complicated formations.

As a matter of fact there is no basis whatever to the above formulated rule. The Tāw of the Hithpa'el is naturally assimilated to the first radical in verbs פ"ת or to Dāleth and Tēth which are related to it in pronunciation, but it is never assimilated to any other letters. The best proof is the fact that the majority of examples cited above occur elsewhere in the Bible plene with Tāw, comp., for instance, יִתְּרוֹמֵם Dan. 11. 36; אֲשֶׁתּוֹמֵם Isa. 63. 5 and Dan. 8. 27; יִשְׁתּוֹמֵם Isa. 59. 16 and Ps. 143. 3; יִתְּבֹנָה Prov. 24. 3; יִתְּנֶשֶׂא Num. 23. 24; תִּתְּנֶשֶׂא *ibid.* 16. 3; תִּתְּנֶשֶׂא Ezek. 17. 14 and Prov. 30. 32; תִּתְּנֶשֶׂא Ezek. 29. 15; מִתְּנֶשֶׂא 1 Kings 1. 5 and 1 Chron. 29. 11; וַיִּתְּבֶם Gen. 24. 65; וַיִּתְּבֶם 2 Kings 19. 1 and Isa. 37. 1; וַיִּתְּבֶם Isa. 59. 6 and Jonah 3. 8; וַיִּתְּבֶם 1 Sam. 3. 14.

It is difficult to imagine that the same verb should occur once with and then without the Tāw of Hithpa'el. It is much more logical to assume that in cases without Tāw we are not dealing with a Hithpa'el at all. This is true especially in a case like תִּשְׁמֹם : it is a well-known

⁸ Gesenius-Kautzsch, *Hebr. Grammatik*, 27th edition, p. 148.

rule that in verbs where the first radical is a sibilant the Tāw of Hithpa'el follows instead of preceding the sibilant ; and if this is not the case here, it is because this verb is not a Hithpa'el.⁹ Important also is the form אָרוֹמָם which fails to exhibit any real assimilation, showing only an extension of the vowel under the א, a phenomenon familiar and usual in the Niph'al before a non-dageshed first radical. The thought of a Hithpa'el here does not occur at all to an un-biassed grammarian, so much have we become accustomed to a reflexive in verbs פִּיר without omission of Tāw : מְתַרוֹשֵׁשׁ, מְתַרוֹנֵן, אֶתְרוֹעֵעַ, Ps. 108. 10 ; אֶתְרוֹעֵעִי *ibid.* 60. 10 ; יִתְרוֹעֵעִי *ibid.* 65. 14 ; תִּתְרַע Prov. 22. 24 ; מְתַרְפֵּא, הִתְרַפָּא, מְתַרְפֵּקָה, הִתְרַפִּית, הִתְרַפָּא, Cant. 8. 5 ; יִתְרוֹעֵעִי, הִתְרַפָּא. And all these examples are taken from the Bible ; I could quote many more from post-biblical Hebrew.

Finally, the verbs נִפְיֵר and נִפְיֵר are best fitted to inform us as to the real morphological nature of all the unusual formations enumerated in the above list. Let us remove the false notion about an assimilated Tāw and remember that the so-called Nithpa'el is a very late product of Mishnic times, then the additional Nūn in both these verbs will clearly prove the Niph'al conjugation and the vocalization of the root, especially the Dagesh forte in the second radical, will point to the intensive Pi'el conjugation. Thus we have before us a grammatical form hitherto unknown, viz. an intensive Niph'al, or more correctly a Nūn reflexive of the Pi'el. This form corresponds, in a morphological

⁹ For this reason I cannot agree with Gesenius (see his Lexicon under זָכָה) and Strack (comp. his Grammar, p. 75) that הִזְכִּי Isa. i. 16 is a Hithpa'el of זָכָה. I am inclined to think that it is a Niph'al of זָכָה, just as הִפְכִּי is derived from סָכַב. If, however, we must insist on the derivation from זָכָה, then we shall have to recognize here, too, the conjugation נִפְעַל or the Nūn reflexive of the Pi'el (see below) : הִזְכִּי = הִזְכִּי and not הִזְכִּי.

sense, to our customary Hithpa'el which is nothing else but a Tāw reflexive of the Pi'el.

All the other examples enumerated above, being in the imperfect with Dagesh forte in the first and second radicals, may be explained in the most natural way as Nūn reflexives of the Pi'el; the first Dagesh compensates the reflexive Nūn which is generally omitted in the imperfect, while the second Dagesh emphasizes the Pi'el. There is no necessity therefore to invent a Tāw of Hithpa'el which assimilates in an extraordinary way.

There still remains an explanation for the striking vocalization of נִפְּרִי and נִכְּפִר. If it is true that no letter has been omitted before the root, the Nūn reflexive being here in evidence, why is there a Dagesh in the first radical?

Apparently we are here face to face with what is known as analogy in linguistics: quite frequently it happens in a language that a rare grammatical form departs from its accustomed and accepted path to follow a more general and frequent grammatical form. It is well known, for instance, that the Nūn of the Niph'al in the third person perfect, before a vocalized first radical as in the verbs נָחַי ע"ו and נָעַע, has a Qāmeṣ under it: נָמוּגוּ, נָסַב, &c. Nevertheless, already in the Bible we meet with forms like נָמוּלוּ, נָמוּלוּ, and in post-biblical times we find this Nūn of the Niph'al always with Hirek: נָלוּשׁ, נָדוּן, נָזוּן, instead of נָזוּן, נָדוּן, נָלוּשׁ. This departure was effected by analogy with the ordinary Niph'al of the greater number of verbs, which is generally Nūn with Hirek (נִפְּקַר, נִפְּטַל). A similar instance of analogy is applicable also in the case of נִפְּרִי and נִכְּפִר: the Nūn of the Niph'al here should have been vocalized with a Shewa: נִפְּרִי, נִכְּפִר, as is customary before an unaccented syllable (נִסְבּוּתִי, נִסְנוּתִי); but under the influence

of the common Niph'al it, too, received a H̱irek. This H̱irek in itself, as a short vowel, commands a Dagesh forte, since it is not closed by a quiescent Shewa, as in the form נָמַל, &c. Thus the Nūn reflexive of the Pi'ēl received the form נִפְעַל or נִפְטַל.

A similar fate, namely, an accidental insertion of a Dagesh forte neither for the purpose of completion nor for emphasis and accentuation, happened to a number of biblical remnants from the primitive passive of the Kāl, which corresponds to Arabic فُعِّلَ, without a Dagesh in the second radical: only for vocal or phonetic reasons—the Kibbuṣ of the first radical, which is characteristic of the passive generally—a Dagesh was inserted in the second radical, resulting in the form קִטַּל, which is similar to the passive of the Pi'ēl, and thus confusing the two passives, that of the Kāl and that of the Pi'ēl, by giving them one and the same form. Remnants of the Pu'al of Kāl are numerous in the Bible: יָלַר from לָקַח, יָלַר = נוֹלַר from יָלַר, יָלַר from עָבַד, יָלַר from שָׁדַר, יָלַר from זָנַח, &c.

As to הִפְבֵּס, it is evident now that it is not a Hothpa'ēl or Passive of the Hithpa'ēl (Arabic تَفْعِلَ), as Gesenius and others have it, but a Passive of Nippa'ēl: הִפְבֵּס¹⁰ = הִפְבֵּס (נִפְבֵּס), and not הִתְבֵּס. Just as Arabic preserved the Passive of the Niph'al or the Nūn reflexive of the Kāl, اُنْفَعِلَ, so the Hebrew seems to have preserved here the Passive of the Nūn reflexive of Pi'ēl. Thus in Hebrew as well as in Arabic the Passive is applicable to both reflexive conjugations, that with Tāw and that with Nūn.

¹⁰ אַחֲרֵי הַכֶּבֶס אֶת הַנֶּנֶע . . . אַחֲרֵי הַכֶּבֶס אוֹתוֹ Lev. 13. 55 f. I think Gesenius is mistaken in construing it as a perfect. As a matter of fact, it is an infinitive of an indefinite passive, and is completed in a direct way, like יוֹם הַלֵּלֶת אֶת פְּרִיעָה Gen. 21. 8, or בְּיוֹם הַנִּמְלֵל אֶת יִצְחָק *ibid.* 40. 20.

I have arranged the twelve examples above in two sets. The second contains forms which prove the presence of the Nūn reflexive, derived from the regular Pi'el. The first, however, contains only examples of an ancient conjugation פועל (فَاعَلَ), which is characterized by a Hōlem plene in all the tenses, and takes the place of Pi'el in verbs נח"ע and ע"ע. This conjugation, known to philologists as the conative verb and preserved in Arabic speech, died among the Hebrews altogether in strong verbs, leaving but a few reminders in the Bible, like מְשׁוּפָּטִי¹¹ Job 9. 15; מְלוּשָׁנִי = מְלוּשָׁנִי Ps. 101. 5; יְסַעַר = יְסוּעַר Hos. 13. 3; שְׁשִׁיתִי = שְׁשִׁיתִי Isa. 10. 13; יִירָעָתִי¹² 1 Sam. 21. 3.

To sum up our inquiry, it is safe to conclude that at an early stage of the Hebrew language the Nūn reflexive was applicable not only to the Kāl (נָפַעַל), but also to the Pi'el and Pō'el. In the Pi'el it assumed the form נִפְעַל; consequently in the Pō'el it must have been נִפְוַעַל.

¹¹ According to Wellhausen, we should read also in Zeph. 3. 15 מְשׁוּפָּטִי instead of מְשׁוּפָּטִי.

¹² There is no necessity to emend with Gesenius (in his Lexicon) נִוְעָרָתִי or הִוְעָרָתִי. The form is correct, and is explained best by the corresponding verb in Arabic وَدَعَ which means 'to bid farewell to', 'to take leave of', &c. (comp. for instance, Wahrmund, *Arabisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, p. 1170, s. v.).